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Argentine Junta Places Military In Top Positions

Argentina's military government is consolidating its control. Military officers occupy the top positions in all 22 provinces and some local jurisdictions, as well as all federal executive posts.

The junta has named army commander General Videla as president. A committee of senior officers will advise him on legislative matters. The intended duration of military rule is still unclear; an official communique specified only that junta members will not represent their services for more than three years.

A ban on all political activity is in effect, but only a handful of left-wing splinter parties have been disbanded so far. The Moscow-oriented Communist Party is not among them.

The junta has taken over the administration of the General Confederation of Workers, the principal labor organization, and banned its political affilitate, the so-called 62 Organizations.

The junta has made no pronouncements on its most pressing problem, the economy. It has said, however, that civilians will be appointed to cabinet posts requiring "unique specialties," and the economy ministry is almost certainly among them. A civilian economist would provide the expertise the military acknowledges it lacks and act as a lightning rod for criticism of future policies.

Apparently encouraged by the lack of resistance to its takeover, the junta is relaxing some of the more obvious controls. The US embassy reports that roadblocks are down, airports are operating normally, and censorship of the press has been lifted.

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